8th Equality, Diversity and Inclusion International Conference

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# Dealing with diverse identities – Workshop Proposal

# Identity and doctoral students: research cultures, supervisor influence and impact

**Aim of this workshop** is to explore the influence and impact that different research cultures and PhD supervisors have on the diverse identities of their doctoral students. During their doctoral journeys, PhD students are socialised within the academy in ways that are both explicit and implicit. Various centrally driven and discipline specific research cultures influence students’ learning and ways of being and doing. However, the major influence on most PhD students is their doctoral supervisor. Although elements of change and transformation are necessary stages that they need to learn in order to develop particular disciplinary identities and practices in order to succeed as researchers, questions are also raised. These concern: whether changes in student identity have been ‘moulded’ according to various research cultures and supervisors’ intentions; the role of power and control in this process; potential loss/changes in identity and the desirability (or otherwise) of such changes.

**Doctoral Students and Identity:** The workshop organisers will encourage discussion and debate on the way that the identities of international higher degree research (IHDR) students are shaped when they move from one country to another in order to study for a PhD. The intention is to make visible the often invisible disciplinary pedagogies and practices that IHDR students learn and experience, particularly as they are frequently more vulnerable in the political landscape of the academic organization when navigating a wide range of extreme positions on ‘how to be, say and do’. In some cases, they come from educational paradigms and systems that subscribe to more fixed views of knowledge and knowledge transmission than local students. They may struggle therefore to initiate themselves into knowledge and ethical paradigms that are different from those they have hitherto experienced and understood. In many ways they are familiar with epistemological standpoints that do not interrogate how knowledge in their discipline is steeped in its own discourses, perspectives and practices and may find it difficult to accept that (doing) research may be more about the (re)production of knowledge in particular ways than the transmission of fixed and stable knowledge. As such, international higher degree research students are apprenticed into these perspectives by faculty members (and their supervisors) who see knowledge in their disciplines as representing stand-alone and unfettered truths.

**Research gap:** While existing research does address the identity formation of doctoral students (Barnacle & Dall'Alba 2013; Barnacle & Mewburn 2010; Mewburn 2011) there is currently a lack of research that investigates the desirability of student changes in identity and the power, control and role of research cultures and doctoral supervision in bringing about such changes.

**Workshop format:** the organisers will give an overview presentation of work they have been undertaking on doctoral supervision and IHDR student experiences/outcomes.

**Participant interaction:** workshop participants will then work in small groups to discuss their experiences, knowledge and research on the changes that doctoral student may experience concerning their identity across the course of the doctoral journey in relation to the influence and impact of research cultures and supervision.

**Plenary:** Feedback will then be shared in a plenary session which will focus on outcomes – for example - ‘where to from here’ – a special issue on the topic?

### References

Barnacle, R. & Dall'Alba, G. 2013, 'Beyond skills: embodying writerly practices through the doctorate', *Studies in Higher Education*, vol. 39, no. 7,pp. 1139-49.

Barnacle, R. & Mewburn, I. 2010, 'Learning networks and the journey of 'becoming doctor'', *Studies in Higher Education*, vol. 35, no. 4,pp. 433-44.

Mewburn, I. 2011, 'Troubling talk: assembling the PhD candidate', *Studies in Continuing Education*, vol. 33, no. 3,pp. 321-32.

**Workshop Organisers:**

Dr Julia Connell - [Julia.Connell@uts.edu.au](mailto:Julia.Connell@uts.edu.au) - is an adjunct Professor of Management, Curtin Business School, Curtin University and Director, Researcher Development, Graduate School of Research at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS). She has also held a number of other roles such as Associate Dean International and Dean of Graduate Studies as well as visiting Professor at various universities in a number of different countries. Julia has published over 60 refereed journal articles and co-edited 5 books related to employment, change, interpersonal and organisational effectiveness. She has consulted for a number of organisations in the public and private sector and participated in international reviews/delegations for universities and the ILO/ASEAN.

Dr Marie Manidis- [Marie.Manidis@uts.edu.au-](mailto:Marie.Manidis@uts.edu.au-) recently completed her doctorate in organisational learning, examining the knowledge practices of nurses and doctors in urban and semi-urban emergency departments. Marie is a Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Graduate Research School, University of Technology, Sydney, Australia. In 2014 Marie developed and delivered a unique program for international higher degree research students at UTS and her research focuses on developing the academic and cultural (organisational) literacies of international higher degree research students. Over the past 30 years, she has worked in private, public, vocational and higher education sectors where she has held a number of specialist and managerial positions.